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CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

THE PASCHAL SERMON

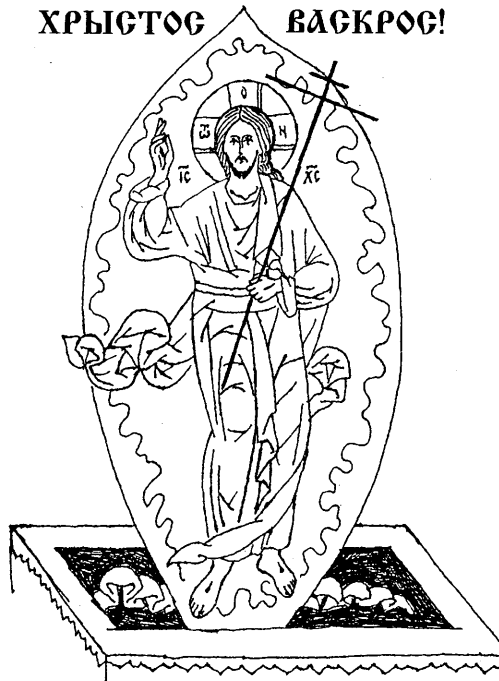
OF

ST. CYRIL, BISHOP OF TURAU

“Redoubled is the rejoicing among all Christians, and unspeakable is the happiness for all the world, because of the feast that has come on this day in place of the grief of the mystery that came before. When a husband departs on a distant journey, his wife in her grief is strict with her children: but when the husband suddenly returns, the wife receives unspeakable happiness and their children exult with joy, for they are enriched beyond measure.

What, then, was the grief of the mystery that came before? On the day before yesterday our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified as a man, and as God. He darkened the sun and turned the moon to blood, and there was darkness over all the land. As man He cried out and yielded up His spirit; but as God He shook the earth, and the rocks were rent. As man He was pierced through the side; but as God He rent in two the veil of the law of old. As a Lamb He bled with blood and water for the blood of lambs previously brought in sacrifice to God the Father for the salvation of all the world. As man He was laid in the sepulcher, and as God He sanctified the altar of the temple of the gentiles. As a king He was guarded by watchmen and lay sealed in the sepulcher, but as God with the armies of the angels He restrained the hosts of the devil in the dungeon of Hades, saying: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, that the king of glory shall come in.” And at His word the gates of Hades crumbled and the gateposts split to their foundations. The Lord Himself descended into Hades

ХРИСТОС ВАСКРОС!



and with the cross He laid waste the kingdom of the devil and annihilated death, and the people who sat in darkness saw the light, and the people who were bound in poverty and iron were released, and He plundered the treasure vaults of darkness and on this day went forth in the power of God and in the glory of the holy angels, and the souls of men that had been enslaved were freed and brought into paradise, glorifying in Christ. Yet before Christ has risen from His sepulcher, the Church rails at the prophets. These prophets are the children of the church. Then of a sudden He arose, and the seals stayed unbroken, and the Church gains un-

speakable happiness, and the prophets exult with joy saying: “For our passover also had been sacrificed, even Christ! O death, where is thy victory? O Hades where is thy sting?” For the Lord is risen from the dead and has given life to them that lay in the grave; and the souls of the saints receive untold wealth, for out of Hades they take their abode in Heaven. Twofold, therefore, and even threefold is the name of this feast. For it is called the Paschal Feast after the lambs slaughtered by Moses in Egypt, with whose blood the Israelites anointed their lintels and their doorposts and were thereby spared by the angels that smote the Egyptians. And this was a prefiguration of Pascha, the Paschal Feast of today. For now Jesus, the Lamb of God, has been slaughtered by the priests for the salvation of all the world and has brought forth Adam, father of all, from Hades. For He came down not for the sake

of the righteous alone, but He raised all the world that had fallen into transgression, and he was nailed to the cross, taking upon Himself the sins of all. And let us now in faith partake in divine passover; let us anoint our lips, the doors to the house of the soul, with the Lord's blood, that demons intent on smiting us with sin should not enter therein.

The Israelites slaughtered Him, but the nations made of Him a repast for themselves. Lo, how the Prophet summons all the faithful to God's table saying: "Receive the body of Christ, taste the fountain of immortality." For with this body the gates of Hades have been smashed and the sting of death has been blunted. With this body the dominion and the power of Hades have been destroyed; with this body its belly has been burst open. For Christ did not come forth again through the mouths of Hades, but He rent the belly of Hades and brought forth there from the souls of men. And when His body was laid in the sepulcher, then the gates of bronze were broken in pieces and the bars of iron were crushed, and the gatekeepers trembled, and the dungeon crumbled, and the dead rose. This body killed death and renewed all creation that was corrupt. Tasting of this body in faith, Christians are sanctified and will receive eternal life. Let us taste, brethren, of the food of life, and let us embrace one another in heartfelt forgiveness of our sins.

The other name of the day of Christ's resurrection is the Great Day. And great indeed is this day: great not in the number of its hours, but in the magnitude of the wonders worked on this day by Christ our Savior.

For on this day angels and men rejoice, and men are sanctified by God as they receive the Holy Spirit. As Luke the Evangelist says: "And when the sabbath had ended, very early in the morning the women came to see the sepulcher, bringing spices, that they might anoint the body of Jesus. And they found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. And they were perplexed thereabout. And two angels in white appeared to them and said unto them: 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is Risen! Remember His words that He spoke to you saying "The third day I shall rise again"; and now go to His disciples and say, "Christ is risen." Of you the prophet of old wrote: "Go forth from this vision, you women who bear good tidings, and say unto Zion: 'Receive from us the joy of glad tidings!' " Go forth to the apostles and say: "Hide you no more"; for behold, the word that Jesus spoke unto you has come to pass: "A little while, and you shall not see me; and again a little while, and you shall see me and rejoice." Remember the prophet

that wrote of Christ and of you: "I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered; but in a little while I shall stretch forth my hand and gather in the little ones, and I shall make for them a shepherd." Go forth and say unto the disciples: "Hear and understand the words of Hosea, who spoke of this time saying, 'The Savior has been smitten by evildoers, and after two days He will heal the world, and on the third day He shall arise and you shall live before Him.' And Zephaniah said: 'Wait upon me, saith the Lord, until the day of my resurrection and my witness, for my mercy is already upon the nations.' " Go forth and say unto the disciples: "this is the day of which David spoke, saying, 'You Lord shall arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time has come.' " I speak not of the Zion that is trampled by soldiers, but of the Church of the nations, which He redeemed with His own blood, and which none shall overcome. And do not imagine that you are deceived as Eve was deceived. She took counsel from the serpent, while you hear the word from angels: for we tell you of the joy, and you will proclaim the salvation of the world.' "

Then the women returned from the sepulcher and told all these things unto the eleven; and they disbelieved them, for they had not yet received the Holy Spirit and were therefore fearful and cowardly and unbelieving. But Peter and John stood up and ran towards the sepulcher. John outran Peter, but he did not enter the sepulcher until Peter had arrived and entered the sepulcher first, and beheld only the clothes lying there. See, then, how he that ran first did not enter. This was not out of fear, but these two prefigured the Old and the New Law. John is the figure of the Old Law, and Peter of the New. For the Old Law came first, as the forerunner of the New, in expectation of Christ. Thus, according to the Scriptures, he came, but did not enter into his faith. And the New Law came later, but believed in Christ earlier. And the New Law sees only the expectation of the Old Law, which is unable to save those who adhere to it. The bird has flown. But these foolish ones keep watch over an empty nest: Christ is risen, yet the priests and the Pharisees bribe the watchmen, ordering them to conceal Christ's resurrection.

O woe unto you, nation of sinners! How are you deceived! You have read the prophets that wrote of Christ, yet you understood them not! So to them that abode in expectation of the light came darkness. Alas for their souls, that counseled ill counsel concerning the living God!

Then two of the disciples went to a village some distance from Jerusalem and talked together of all these things,

and Jesus Himself drew near. For as a shepherd, when he was lain down to slumber awhile, rises and beholds that his flock has scattered, and darts this way and that in order to gather his flock, so Christ also, after His resurrection, gathers angels and men into one flock.

And He said: "What communications are these that you have one with another, and are sad?" And they told Him of the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, whom the priests of the Jews had crucified; and they told Him of the women who said that they had but recently heard from two angels that He was alive. For they did not recognize Him, since they had the vision of the flesh: for Christ had not yet breathed upon them saying, "Receive you the Holy Spirit"; nor yet had He opened their minds that they might understand what had been written about Him in the Scriptures. For this reason He called them "foolish of heart." And He began to expound unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself, concerning His passion and His resurrection.

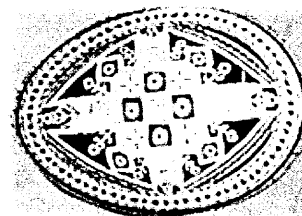
And He said: "Was it not about this that Moses wrote, 'You shall see your life hanging before your eyes?' And David wrote of the crucifixion: 'They pierced my hands and my feet.' And of the gall he wrote: 'They gave me also gall for my food and made me drink vinegar for my thirst.' And of the sepulcher he wrote: 'They laid me in the lowest pit, in the dark places and in the shadow of death.' And also of the resurrection: 'Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered'; and 'Arise, O God, judge the earth!' And Isaiah wrote, concerning the disciples: 'And I shall arise and gather in my brethren, and they shall see my glory, and they shall declare my name among the nations, and I shall have a numerous people from the gentiles.'"

And while He was saying this they drew nigh unto the village, where they were going. And they constrained Him to abide with them. And it came to pass, when He had sat down, that He took the bread and blessed it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they saw the wounds of the nails in His hands, and they knew Him, that He was Christ Himself. And He vanished from before them. And they returned to Jerusalem and told all this to the apostles, saying, "Christ is risen indeed, and has appeared to us, and we knew Him by the wound of the nails."

And we also, brethren, as we behold Christ's resurrection, let us worship Him saying: "Thou art our God; we know no other God besides You. Visible as man, knowable as God, let all the earth worship You and sing to

You: 'Have mercy on us, who have faith in You!' We pray to You, and we entreat You. Cleanse our sins, redeem the debts of our souls as we glorify You. You have suffered crucifixion and death for our sakes, and now we humbly serve You. Yesterday we were crucified with the robbers; today we are resurrected with You. Yesterday we cried out with Longinus [the centurion], 'Truly You are the Son of God!' Today we say with the angels: 'Christ is risen indeed.' Yesterday with Nicodemus we took You down from the cross; today with Mary Magdalene we beheld You risen. Yesterday with Joseph of Arimathea we laid You in the tomb; today like Mary we hear Your words of joy: 'Go to my brethren and to Peter, and tell them that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me.'"

And so now we gather into the holy church, as if into Galilee, and we rejoice and saying: This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it, for Yours is the kingdom and Yours, Christ, is the power and the glory with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, now and ever.



PASCHA and EGGS

Pascha is a time when many customs are shared by Orthodox Christians. One of these customs is the exchange of Pascha eggs. The egg symbolically represents Christ's death on the cross, His burial in the sepulcher and His glorious Resurrection. Although many colors have been used when dyeing eggs, the color red is the most traditional. A tradition of dyeing eggs using onion skin has been used as well. The red color represents Christ's Blood which was shed for us on the Cross. The egg represents the tomb in which He was buried for three days. The cracking of the egg reminds us of our wish to break our bonds with sin and to enter into a new life as a result of the Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Eggs are blessed in church on Pascha at the conclusion of Resurrection Matins. Pascha baskets are blessed in the parish hall or outside since meat is not allowed to be brought into the church.



ST. CYRIL OF TURAU

Cyril was born in Turau around the year 1130 and was a son of wealthy parents. By all historical accounts he was not self-educated but, rather had formal instruction under the direction of an experienced instructor, probably of Greek heritage.

As a young man Cyril resolved to dedicate his life to God. He felt that he could best accomplish this by entering a monastery in his native city. There Cyril sought to please God making himself a worthy dwelling-place for the Holy Spirit by wearing out his body with vigils and fasts. There he taught other monks to be humble and obedient to their Abbott. Obedience was the main characteristic of the saint's ascetical teachings. Cyril began to live a more severe form of ascetic life by becoming a stylite, a practice of monasticism which involved living in solitude by building and living in a pillar. This was practiced in the 5th century in the middle east. It seems that the climate of Belarus would not allow anyone to live a life in this fashion and it is most likely that not a pillar but, rather a pillar like solitary cell. However St. Cyril's search for solitude reached an opposite effect.

His popularity grew so much so that when Bishop George of Turau died, the prince and people of Turau petitioned the metropolitan to appoint St. Cyril as the new bishop of Turau. It is important to note also that Turau was one of the first episcopal sees in Belarus. As other defenders of the True Orthodox Faith, St Cyril denounced heresy as with the case of Theodore, bishop of Rostiv who was ultimately arrested and condemned to death for persecuting clergy and lay people who did not want to communicate with him.

St. Cyril has been given credit for writing some thirty prayers, two canons, letters on spiritual life, and eight famous sermons which earned him the reputation of the "Belarusian Golden Tongued" or the second St. John the Chrysostom.

His eight sermons included sermons given on: Palm Sunday, Pascha, St. Thomas Sunday, Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women, Sunday of the Paralytic, Sunday of the Blind Man, Ascension, and Sunday of the First Council of Nicea. His Pascha sermon has been printed in today's issue of "The Church Messenger". His other sermons will be printed in future additions.

One example of the many prayers which he wrote is the following prayer to be said on Saturday evening:

"Make me worthy, O Lord, to see the morning and the sun and to be preserved, with Your help, from sin; and grant that I may praise Your unbounded greatness. You have made this entire world for the service of us sinner: also make me worthy of these Your gifts. I pray to You, O Merciful Lord, grant that one day I may see the inextinguishable, endless, incorruptible light of Your face. And now, with Your help, rejoicing in Your mercy, I cry to You: Glory to You, consubstantial, undivided, lifegiving glorious Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen.

St. Cyril wrote three canons: the great penitential canon, the supplication to Our Lord Jesus Christ and the canon to St. Olga, the grandmother of St. Vladimir. Canons are hymns and readings which are sung and read in honor of: a particular Feast Day, Our Savior, The Mother of God, Angels and Saints during Matins. An example of an excerpt of the canon to Our Savior is as follows:

Irmos

Seated like Jonas, within the whale of my evil deeds, I cry out to You, O Christ: Before my soul perishes, take me out of the sinful depths and lead me into Your holy church and hear my prayer.

To You I fly, O Christ, asking for remission of my sins, with which I have burdened my wretched soul from youth till the present day: But You, O Merciful One, give me tears of repentance.

You are most merciful, O Christ and you do not

want the death of a sinner: light up the lamp of Your loving kindness and recover me, Your lost coin, and calling all the holy neighbors, make a joyous feast for angels and for men.

In vain you labor, o my soul, seeking to save yourself alone, if you have no help from God. Therefore I prostrate in adoration before you, O Holy Trinity: save me who puts all His hope in You.

You are greater than all earthly and heavenly powers, O Most Pure Virgin, Mother of God! Be my advocate before Your Son and the God of all, that He may give me consolation on the day of judgment.

St. Cyril of Turau wrote in Old Belarusian, his native language. While his way of expression was learned from the Greeks, being influenced by St Gregory the Nazarene, St John the Chrysostom and St Epiphanius of Cyprus he never forgot to infuse the character of his own language. He is credited for revealing for the first time the richness and beauty of the Belarusian language.

This saint and bishop of Turau is considered the greatest of the early Belarusian writers and the first known Belarusian poet. Taken from the book the *Prologue* we read concerning St. Cyril:

"Thus having run his course well and piously and having looked well after the flock entrusted to him, he passed over to life eternal and everlasting. Let us come today, brethren, and praise this holy bishop, saying: Hail, noble hierarch, teacher, second Chrysostom, who shined forth more than any other in Rus. Hail, you who with your holy and resplendent teaching enlightened every corner of Rus. Hail you who, like a sun, brought the light of divine knowledge to those who were in the shadows and in darkness. We entreat you, offering this our humble supplication: Pray for us to the Almighty, in Whose presence you dare now stand, that we may be delivered from our present afflictions and freed from the godless Tartars tormenting us all the time. May we also through your prayers, obtain mercy and the remission of sins and the enjoyment of eternal goods in the life to come in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

As we hear about all the current suffering and persecution that our brothers and sisters are enduring in Belarus let us pray to St. Cyril. As he once enlightened the Belarusian lands let us pray and beseech him to intercede to God for peace, tranquility, love and freedom for all the suffering people of Belarus!

PASCHA or EASTER ?

In our current society it seems that sometimes Orthodox Christians forget the correct names of the Feast Days of the Church. As Orthodox Christians we celebrate the Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The other correct name which we use for this Feast day is Pascha and not Easter.

Pagan goddesses, in Scandinavian "Ostra" and the Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon "Ostern" or "Eostre" signified spring and fertility whose festival was celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox. Their symbol was the rabbit.

Pascha literally means "*Passover*". For Orthodox Christians, Christ was the last sacrificial Lamb. As we know from the Old Testament in the Bible, when pharaoh persecuted the Israelites, God sent Moses to free them from bondage. When pharaoh did not heed God's order, God sent an angel to punish by death Egyptian households. Moses instructed his people to mark their doors with lamb's blood. When the angel saw the marked doors he "*passed over*" and that household was spared. When Christ came and took on human flesh and was incarnated His sole purpose for coming on this earth was to die on the Cross in order that we could have Salvation. On Holy Thursday when the Holy Apostles gathered with Our Lord to celebrate passover, there was no animal sacrifice. Christ taking bread gave it to His apostles and said, "Take eat this is my Body which is broken for you for the forgiveness of sins." Then taking wine, He said, "Drink of it all of you, this is My Blood of the New Covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins." It was Christ who was the Sacrificial Lamb and the shedding of His Precious Blood on the Cross washed away all sins of the world. From that point on there was no need for any more animal sacrifices. That is why we do not sacrifice animals any longer. No sacrifice could be greater than the shedding of Christ's Precious Blood. From that moment we as Orthodox Christians passed over into the bloodless sacrifice. We celebrate Divine Liturgy and draw near to the Holy Mysteries, Our Savior is Our Precious Lamb and Pascha is the New Passover and we are the New Jerusalem.

The proper Orthodox Greeting on Pascha is **not** "Happy Easter"! The proper Orthodox Greeting on Pascha is "**Christ Is Risen!**". The Proper Orthodox Response is "**Indeed He Is Risen!**". As Orthodox Christians it is very important that we learn our Orthodox Traditions and practice them in our daily lives. Let us not forget Christ's Great Sacrifice and Great Love for us all!

WHY THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN'S CELEBRATION OF PASCHA DIFFERS FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD

Many people ask why the Orthodox Christian's celebration of the Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, or Pascha, usually falls on a Sunday different from the rest of world. The Orthodox celebrate Pascha according to the decree of the First Ecumenical Council which was held in Nicea in 325 A.D. The Orthodox Church follows the Church Canons, or laws, which were established at the Seven Ecumenical Councils. Recently there has been much discussion concerning the finding of a "common date of celebrating Easter".

First of all, Orthodox Christian do not celebrate the *pagan termed Easter* but rather *Pascha*. Secondly, there could never be any compromise on the date when we celebrate Pascha. It is very sad that there are Hierarchs who call themselves Orthodox but are willing to compromise on Orthodoxy for the sake of ecumenism.

In an article "The First Ecumenical Synod and the Feast of Pascha" written by Archimandrite Sergius, the former Assistant professor at the Theological Academy in Sofia, Bulgaria, he clearly outlines the argument against changing the date of Pascha. As a side note, Fr. Sergius was removed from his academic post when he refused to accept the revised *New or Papal Calendar* on the occasion of its introduction into the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

From the writings of the Fathers of the Church let us examine their perspective. **St. Athanasios the Great**, a personal and active participant in the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea writes, "The Synod of Nicea was convened on account of the heresy of Arius and because of the issue of Pascha. The Synod of Nicea was held not without manifest reason, but out of good reason and urgent need; for the Christians of Syria, Cilicia, and Mesopotamia were erring with regard to the holy days and celebrated the Pascha with the Jews".

St. Ambrose of Milan, writing to the bishops of the district of Emilia in 386 AD responds to a question from them regarding the lateness of Pascha in 387 AD, "The determination of the Feast of Pascha according to the

teaching of Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition of the Fathers who assembled at the Synod in Nicea requires not a little wisdom. Aside from other marvelous rules of Faith, the Holy Fathers, with the aid of eminently experienced men appointed to determine the aforementioned Feast Day, produced a calculation for its date of nineteen years' duration and established a cycle of sorts that became a model for ensuing years. This cycle they called the *nonus decennial* and its goal being... the sacrifice of the Resurrection of Christ all places on the same night. We must observe a rule, such that the fourteenth moon [I.e., the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan, the Jewish Passover] be not set on the day of the Resurrection, but on the day of the passion of Christ, or on another preceding day, since the celebration of the Resurrection is celebrated on Sunday." He cites the example of the fourteenth moon falling on Sunday April 9, 377 AD and Pascha being celebrated the Sunday after on April 16. St Ambrose in essence confirms the correctness of the basic condition set by the "*Alexandrian Paschalion*" and universally accepted by the Synod in Nicea: that the Pascha of Christ must never coincide with the Jewish Passover and that it must not only follow the Jewish Passover, but be celebrated on Sundays, at that.

Additionally, Paschal Epistles of the Patriarchs of Alexandria which were issued at the beginning of each year confirm the basic rules for the calculation of Pascha. Many of these were preserved by St. Athanasios for the period 329—335 AD and St. Cyril of Alexandria for the period 414—442 AD. Practically all of these epistles support and affirm the canonical decree **against** celebrating Pascha "simultaneously with the Jews" and their Passover, since not a single of the Paschal dates coincides with the date of Jewish Passover.

St. John the Chrysostom, while still a priest in Antioch, delivered three sermons against celebrating Pascha with the Jewish Passover because many people in that city, out of ignorance, were celebrating Pascha simultaneously with the Jewish Passover. St John invokes the decree issued by the Synod in Nicea: "More than three hundred Fathers, assembled in the land of Bythinia, (at Nicea), decreed this [that is that Pascha must not be celebrated simultaneously with the Jewish Passover-*authors note*], and you dishonor them in this way. You convict them either of ignorance, as if they are unaware of what they were appointing, or of cowardice, as if they knew the truth, but only by pretense, and betrayed it. This is the implication, if you do not respect their decree. Great wisdom and manliness are evidenced in all the acts of the Synod.... Beware, then, of

what you do, for you are bringing accusation against a great many wise and manly Fathers. If Christ is found among the two or three [St Matthew 18:20], all the more was He found among the three hundred, when they determined and established all these things. Furthermore, you accuse not only them, but the whole ecumene, for it approved their decree. Do you consider the Jews more intelligent than the Fathers who were assembled from every part of the inhabited world?" St John chastises these people not only for celebrating Pascha with the Jews but for also fasting with the Jews and infraction explicitly forbidden by the seventieth Apostolic Canon which states, "Whosoever fasts with the Jews or celebrates with them...should be excommunicated!"

St. Epiphanius of Cyprus denounced the Audiani, a heretical sect which flourished in his day because they wanted to celebrate Pascha together with the Jews. The Audiani tried to prove that they should be celebrating at the same time that, "The Jews prepare their unleavened bread" However, St. Epiphanius, a contemporary of St. John Chrysostom, defended the church's view, "God revealed the truth of this matter to us through two great acts, wrought by the pious and Ever-Blessed Emperor Constantine, who: 1) convened the Ecumenical Synod that established the Symbol of the Faith, composed in Nicaea and confirmed by the signatures of the bishops gathered there; and 2) clarified, with their aid and for the sake of Christian unity, the issue of the dating of Pascha...which was accomplished when the bishops gathered from everywhere, examined the issue in detail and unanimously decreed that Pascha should be celebrated in accordance with their ordinances. The Holy Church of God...takes into consideration, not only the fourteenth day[of the month of Nisan], but the week-the cyclical repetition of a series of seven days-,as well...The Church considers not only the fourteenth lunar day, but also the movement of the sun, so as to prevent the celebrations of two Paschas in the same year....For, though we give attention to the fourteenth day, we pass beyond the equinox, and then, further, assign the celebration of Pascha to God's holy day, that is to Sunday. Much could be said about how perfectly well the Fathers, or, more precisely, God Himself, through them, fixed for the Church the **correct and true celebration** of this loftiest and most holy Feast, such that it might be celebrated after the equinox and that we not celebrate Pascha on the fourteenth." This is clearly to say that we should not celebrate Pascha with the Jews on their Passover.

St. Cyril of Alexandria wrote an epistle to the Orthodox Pope of Rome, St. Leo. He is referred to as Orthodox be-

cause he adhered to the True Apostolic Traditions of the Church and he lived prior to the period when Roman Catholic Church broke away from the Holy Orthodox Church. St. Cyril writes, "Let us carefully examine what the Synod in Nicaea decreed with regard to the calculation of the fourteen moons of each month of the nineteen-year [Paschal] cycle; for at every [ensuing] synod, it has been decreed that no Church may do anything at odds with the resolution agreed upon at the Synod of Nicaea about Pascha."

Holy Martyr St. Proterios, killed by the Non-Chalcedonians in 457 AD, addressed the issue of the late Pascha in the year 455 AD. In that year the Jewish Passover fell on April 17. St Proterios state, "Christ's pascha should be moved to the following Sunday April 24, in keeping with what our Fathers did." Here he clearly means the Holy Fathers who participated in the Synod of Nicaea. He continues to say, "When our most blessed Holy Fathers fixed the inviolable nineteen-year cycle [of the paschalion], they established this very calculation not in accordance with the present-day ignorant and inane devices of the Jews or according to the spurious wisdom of the Gentiles; the Holy Fathers were, rather, guided by the Grace of the Holy Spirit and carefully took into account the fourteen Paschal moons in the course of the aforementioned cycle of nineteen years."

St. Maximos the Confessor who lived in the seventh century perfected the nineteen-year Paschal cycle and it was called the Great Indiction. He multiplied nineteen by twenty eight(the period after which a specific calendar date returns to the same day of the week, that is, Sunday). The Great Indiction encompassed a repetitive cycle of 532 years [$19 \times 28 = 532$] comprising the dates for Pascha for each year. St. Maximos writes, "We who are, by Grace, vouchsafed to keep the Pascha of Christ, Our Lord, with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth [I Corinthians 5:8], allow one day to elaps [in order to celebrate Pascha] when March 21 falls on a Saturday and that Saturday is the fourteenth day of the moon. If April 18 happens to fall on a Sunday and the Sunday is, according to the Jewish calendar, the fourteenth day of the lunar month, then we allow seven days to elapse before celebrating Pascha. This is because, within the thirty-five days between March 22 and April 25, the redeeming day of Pascha is appointed to be celebrated according to the canons, not before the former date or after the latter, by virtue of Church rules and the tradition concerning these dates." The Alexandrian Paschalion abides by these same dates to this day, as well as the absolutely clear proscription, in St Maximos' comments,

Against the celebration of Pascha on the same day as the Jewish Passover.

It is sad that some of the Orthodox Churches are ashamed to adhere to the Traditions of the Church. This is quite clear and evidenced by those who chose to accept the Gregorian Calendar, issued by Pope Gregory of the Roman Catholic Church. These same Churches or "Jurisdictions" have embarked on the road of compromise for the sake of ecumenism or "oneness". It seems that an outer appearance of oneness is more important than discussing doctrinal differences, faith and piety. Having achieved the change from the Julian Calendar to the Gregorian Calendar, these same churches feel that the next step is to disregard the Orthodox Paschalion which seems to be the last real stumbling block to "their" yearning for ecumenical unity. These same churches seem to feel that their clergy serving together at ecumenical services do not violate canon law. They are wrong! You have seen that the Holy Fathers clearly outlined the date by which

Pascha must be celebrated. Yet these renovators of Orthodoxy have been trying to chip away at the truth so that eventually it would fit into the mold of the non-Orthodox. It is always easier to go with the flow! These same churches have bowed down to "political correctness" rather than to Apostolic Tradition. They seem to always ask, "What have we changed that is truly important." When the Gregorian Calendar was accepted, we heard



FROM THE EDITOR

We are pleased to release for the very first time the English version of "THE CHURCH MESSENGER". We will be printing articles on the lives of the saints, liturgical explanations and practices in the Orthodox Church, and historical and theological issues.

On behalf of "The Orthodox Messenger", I wish to thank Reader Paul Drozdowski for contributing the iconographic and artistic sketches found in this journal. If you have any questions or wish to see a future article address a religious matter concerning the Orthodox Faith please send your requests to: The Church Messenger, PO Box 5982, Somerset, NJ 08875-5982. Since there is no subscription at the moment, any monetary support to offset the cost of printing would be greatly appreciated. Please send any support to the same address. Thank you!

Archimandrite Alexei, editor

reasons why the change was necessary. "Families of two faiths should be able to celebrate 'Christmas' together". "We live in America". We have also heard, "What difference does it make when we celebrate these Holy days?"

At what point do we say no more change? At what point do we say no more compromise? At what point will we still be able to recognize the Holy Orthodox Church? Just as the Great Saints of the Church have stood up and fought heresy and compromise, so we too must wake up and defend Holy Orthodoxy. That is why we should know our priests and bishops and what they stand for. Many stand up proudly and recite history, beat their chests and proclaim, "We are canonical. Those who do not follow us are uncanonical!"

Like Pharisees who no longer have the spirit of faith but just go through luke-warm motions. In the Gospel [St. John 10: 11-13] we read, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. A hired hand is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep. When he sees a wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and quickly runs away. So the wolf drags the sheep away and scatters the flock. The hired hand is concerned about what he is going to get paid and not about the sheep." My dear Orthodox Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us strive to be vigilant. Let us remember to love all people but, let us preserve our one True Holy and Ap-

ostolic Orthodox Faith. Loving people and compromising on matters of faith are separate and distinct. Do not be deceived by those who are willing so quickly to modernize Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy does not need a "face lift". It is not important what the world thinks, it is important what God thinks. It is also a spiritual comfort not to celebrate these Feast Days with the rest of the world. The world has so commercialized these Holy Days that it is comforting when the commercialism ends and the True Feast Days on the True Dates are celebrated by pious Orthodox Christians. It is so refreshing and up lifting on Pascha when at midnight the faithful process around the church and return to the front door. The priest proclaims the great words, "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered; let them also that hate Him flee before Him. This is the day which the Lord has made let us be glad and rejoice in it!" For Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!